

# Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF

5

October - November 1999

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**YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN WARSAW  
28 DECEMBER 1999 - 1 JANUARY 2000**

## “Warsaw is open to the young”

*In the different  
countries of Europe, groups are being organized to prepare for the  
meeting and to make the journey together.*



“I am glad that at this unique time, as we enter the year 2000, we will welcome young pilgrims from so many countries from the East and the West, from the North and the South. We want to welcome them warmly, even if our resources are limited. Warsaw is open to them; the parishes will receive them with joy and I am counting on a mutual sharing of our gifts which will be beneficial for all.”

With these words Cardinal Glomp, the archbishop of Warsaw, expressed his

joy in welcoming those who will come to take part in the European meeting at the end of the year.

In the different countries of Europe, groups are being organized to prepare for the meeting and to make the journey together. Although the Portuguese will have to come by plane, for many of the participants the distance is shorter than in years past. Many say that they already feel like pilgrims: they have to leave behind all kinds of habits and comfort to make room for the demanding search to be bearers of peace and reconciliation. In this way they are preparing themselves inwardly to give for five days, all together, the image of a reconciled

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ON THE HILL OF TAIZÉ

## A Summer of Meetings

*The international meetings of young adults continue in Taizé until November, but with the arrival of autumn the great waves of participants from throughout the world begin to slow down. As the new school year begins, many of them will be looking for ways to put into practice what they have discovered during their summer stay on the hill.*

One of the highlights of the summer was the arrival of the first group from Yugoslavia in late July. All in all, some 500 Yugoslavs spent a week in Taizé during the month of August. Once they had got off their coach, there was nothing to distinguish them from all the other young adults, and yet they were just getting over the nightmare of two months of bombings. Among them, two choirs from the Orthodox cathedrals of Novi Sad and Sremski Karlovci were present. They sang for the others every day, and this allowed many people to discover their tradition and their commitment in the Church.

The Orthodox priest who came with them said to the brothers, “We have come here to share with you the beauty of Orthodox liturgical singing. From the first moment we arrived, we have been full of joy and happiness. The first thing that struck us was the order, the peace and the worship. I have never seen so many people together for prayer. It made me think of the gospel story of Christ feeding five thousand persons in the desert. I think of that event when I see all these young people here whom you bring together and nourish in soul and body. We are very happy to have seen all this, and we pray that God will enable you to continue and to grow until you reach the full measure of Christ, and so that we may become close to one another and that we may come together to form one flock with one shepherd.”

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## The summer in Taizé...

The crisis in the Balkans last spring caused many to realize to their sadness that the building up of a united Europe is far from finished. For this reason, the presence of so many Romanians, Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbians and Macedonians in the meetings was even more significant. It represented an opportunity and a responsibility to seize. Many of them were Orthodox, and so the Byzantine liturgy could be celebrated every week.

Other young people made the sufferings and the hopes of the human family present. Among them were twenty-six Haitians, as well as Pakistanis and Indians, Africans from more than thirty different countries, and the Russians who arrived after a journey by coach of 3000 kilometres in spite of the economic crisis their country is going through.

This great variety was particularly visible during the Saturday afternoon forum, when young people from different continents share elements of their life and their culture. On several occasions in the course of the week, groups from Africa, Asia or Latin America took time to communicate the realities of their lands and the life of their local Church. Four young people from Cameroun, for

example, led an afternoon workshop each week on the topic "Traditional Music and the Gospel." These young people who come from far away often stay for several months, and thus they can take on a lot of responsibility for the meetings, the welcome and the practical work.

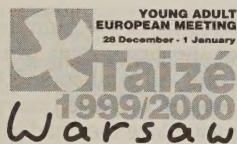
Themes for reflection were along three lines, based on bible introductions, personal experiences and times of sharing:

- The wellsprings of the faith and deepening one's understanding of the Bible
- New forms of solidarity to create
- The search for peace ("Opportunities and challenges of planetization and new technologies," "Building a united Europe," "The lessons of crises like the one in Kosovo," "How can we be Christians while taking on responsibilities in society?" "Hope today in Africa")

The rhythm of life in Taizé is made up of two basic movements that fit together like breathing in and breathing out. Three times a day, everyone comes together for prayer: that is the "breathing in." Listening to the Word of God, singing, remaining in silence invites us to turn towards Christ. Everyone is committed very personally while at the same time being supported by the others. Prayer makes us aware, little by little,

that it is possible to find unity amidst the diversity of backgrounds, gifts and paths. The "breathing out" is the meetings with others: groups of reflection, different forms of service for the day-to-day running of things, free time for many different encounters. By listening, discussing and working together, personal bonds are formed, unique relationships which each one keeps like treasure. Horizons become wider: personal names, faces and lives are gradually linked to the names of countries on the globe.

As the days pass, this breathing in and out allows the Gospel to shed light on the whole of life. And when people return home and have less time, are more isolated and forced to deal with many different activities, the experience can serve as a point of reference that allows us to keep searching. The meeting in Warsaw at the end of the year offers a captivating perspective to those who want to continue the search they began during the summer. Halfway between London and Moscow, it will be more than a symbol for those who have discovered that serving trust between peoples begins with personal encounters and requires deep roots so that it can last amidst the uncertainties of existence.



Europe where each person has a place and can share the best they have.

### HOSPITALITY IN FAMILIES

Preparations have been going on for several weeks in Warsaw itself; information meetings are being held in the different parishes. Some brothers, sisters and young people from Taizé are present, available to support the preparation groups that are being formed in the parishes. Close to 300 parishes will be open to the young. St Stanislas Kostki parish offered space for the central information point. This parish is known throughout Poland, and even beyond. It is where Father Popieluszko lived, the priest who was very committed to the workers and the Solidarity movement, which made possible so many changes in Europe. The tomb of this martyr-witness is beside the church; it is a place of pilgrimage for many. At the heart of the preparation for the European meeting, a daily prayer takes place in the early afternoon in one of the churches in the centre of Warsaw, close to the cathedral.

Very quickly, what could already be sensed before the summer was shown to be true: the great willingness of families to offer hospitality. This hospitality will be one of the characteristic aspects of the

meeting. Each day, times of worship will bring together all the participants; they will enable us to draw from the wellsprings of communion in God, to let Christ and the Gospel enlighten our lives. A prayer will be held in the parishes every morning, followed by a time of sharing in small groups during which the young people will listen, where possible, to people from Warsaw involved in various forms of service to others. These times of small-group searching, where each person has an opportunity to express themselves freely, in addition to the welcome in families, will provide an opportunity to deepen contacts and to understand better what is essential for others and for oneself.

### AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

Many Poles were present in Taizé all summer long. They communicated their joy at hosting the meeting, and shared something of their life in Warsaw:

"Organizing the European meeting will lead us to work together with many others in the parish. And those who put their hand to the plough discover an enthusiasm, ways of doing good, that will lead them to go further in the service of others. That will be one of the fruits of the meeting. It will be precious for those parishes which do not yet have many groups active in serving others, where there is not yet a real sense of community.

"In Warsaw there are people who are afraid of the future, of all that comes from abroad, especially elderly persons

who suffered from the war. For all of them, even those who cannot welcome someone into their home, discovering young people from other countries who have come to pray and to share will be the sign of a possible future, a seed of reconciliation."

"I see the meeting as an opportunity to respond to the call which the Pope made during his last pilgrimage to Poland, when he asked us not to forget what we have received from our parents, to keep in mind the gifts we have received. Some people in Poland have the tendency to think that whatever comes from the rest of Europe is better and we should do everything in the same way as others. The presence of young people from all the countries of Europe will help us to realize better the gifts that are ours and that we can share. One of these gifts is the feeling of belonging to a community, for example seeing the importance of family life."

"Our parish is in one of those new districts where the average age is quite young. Like many others, we have to build a church to replace the prefabricated structure we are presently using. The priest has strongly emphasized that the most important thing is first to build a community. So before constructing a church building, we are going to build a house of hospitality for the poor. That will make it clear for us that the best way the parish community can bear witness to God's love is by putting themselves at the service of others. We also have a



for children whose parents cannot  
take care of them. Some of us go often to  
visit them and take them on outings."

## THE ESSENTIAL TAKES PLACE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST

"The simple fact that young people  
choose to spend the end of the year as  
pilgrims of reconciliation, praying  
together and meeting with others, will be  
an extraordinary sign: it will be the sign  
that, for them, the essential takes place in  
our relationship to Christ. The fact that  
so many young adults come here to pray  
for peace is a source of real trust in the  
future.

"We have many prejudices against  
other nations, thinking that the economic  
condition of a country testifies to the cul-  
ture and the values of its inhabitants.  
Meeting people from other countries will  
help us to see things differently: we are  
going to offer hospitality to young peo-  
ple who have a lot to share, whatever  
country they may come from. And, by  
opening our homes and our hearts, we  
will witness to the best of what we have."

"It is very true to speak of the Euro-  
pean meeting as a 'pilgrimage of trust.'  
The participants come with great trust in  
those who will offer them hospitality.  
And this trust is reciprocal, because we  
are opening our doors to people we don't  
know. There is also the trust that will  
grow up among those of us who are  
involved in the preparation. We will  
learn to count on one another, to work  
together with our different gifts and our  
different ages, to be attentive to those  
around us in all parts of the district. I  
think that this trust will help us to be  
more aware of what we can build  
together. We are fond of having discus-  
sions that last for hours about every-  
thing, but I think that we are also able to  
build something together concretely."

"I am especially happy about the sign  
which this meeting will be for the city. In  
Warsaw, like in other large cities, people  
run around the whole day and don't  
have time to stop and see what is going  
on around them. When the city is full of  
smiling, joyful young people, then many  
will wonder what is happening. It will be  
a magnificent sign of the Gospel to see  
these young people all together at that  
time of the year simply on account of  
their faith. It is also a joy for me that it  
will be an occasion for groups from the  
parish to work together, as well as with  
others who do not belong to these  
groups. This will help the parish to grow  
as a community."

## PREPARING FOR THE EUROPEAN MEETING

How can we set out as pilgrims? What can  
we do so that the sign of reconciliation we  
live out together will not be detached from  
our ordinary life? By searching for answers  
to these questions, the preparation for the  
meeting in each place will be a way of going

## The hope of Cardinal Glemp, the archbishop of Warsaw

During a conversation to prepare the meeting Cardinal Glemp, the arch-  
bishop of Warsaw, expressed his hope with the following words:

"The young adult European meeting will be a very important event. The  
participants will pray and get to know one another. They will give to those  
around them a testimony of unity, trust in God and reconciliation. Brother  
Roger, the founder of the Taizé Community, is a man of great charisma and  
vast horizons of thinking. He knows how to make God's face accessible to  
the young, to invite them to meditate and to pray. In this way the young re-  
ceive an orientation for their life.

"This year, the European meeting which brings together young adults  
from across the continent will take place in our capital city of Poland. It has a  
special significance because of the historical moment—the end of the  
millennium is approaching and the year of jubilee beginning. Those coming  
from throughout Europe will give a unique character to this transition to the  
year 2000. I am glad that at precisely this moment we will welcome young  
pilgrims from so many countries of the East and the West, the North and the  
South. We want to welcome them warmly, even if our resources are limited.  
Warsaw is open to them; the parishes will receive them with joy and I am  
counting on a mutual sharing of our gifts which will be beneficial for all."

forward together with many others. It will be  
a kind of anticipation of the meeting itself. In  
many regions, from Portugal to the Baltic  
countries, from Ireland to Romania, regular  
gatherings for prayer and sharing will be  
held. Some questions can help us reflect:

- What encourages me to set out on a pil-  
grimage? What holds me back?
- How can I begin to put reconciliation into  
practice where I live?
- How can I listen more to Christ? What  
helps me to realize that he is already with  
me, that he goes before me?
- There must be others who would be inter-  
ested in beginning the year 2000 in this  
unique manner. How can we invite them  
to join us?

Taking part in this pilgrimage means also  
sharing what I have discovered with others,  
especially when I return home. How can I  
look for ways of maintaining and deepening  
links with different groups and local Chris-  
tian communities?

### PRACTICAL DETAILS

**Arrival:** Tuesday morning, 28 December 1999  
between 7am and 12 noon. **Departure:** Satur-  
day late afternoon, 1 January 2000

**General programme:** Participants will be wel-  
comed by families and local church communities  
throughout the city and surrounding region.  
Morning prayer each day will be in one of the  
churches of the neighbourhood where you are  
staying. Then meetings in small groups with  
other participants and with local people. Each  
day—midday and evening—there will be two  
common prayers for all participants of the meet-  
ing together. In the afternoon, workshops on  
various themes.

**Accommodation:** with families, but often in  
simple conditions. It is essential to bring a sleep-  
ing-bag and camping mat.

#### 17 to 29 year olds:

- those who arrive on 28th December choose  
one of two ways of taking part:
- participation in the life of parishes of the city  
(this is the main group);
- helping in a team that has a practical respon-  
sibility (meal distribution, church team, choir  
group), while still participating in the life of a  
parish.

- those who can help, as animators in parishes  
or as team-leaders for practical tasks, or in  
the choir group, need to arrive on Sunday  
26th December, between 8am and 3pm (ar-  
rival not possible on 27th December).

**16 year olds** may come to the meeting only if  
accompanied by an adult over 18, with each  
adult accompanying no more than two 16 year  
olds so as to stay in the same family with them.  
Arrival: 28th December—not before. All take  
part in the main group during the meeting: «par-  
ticipation in the life of parishes of the city».

**Adults over 30:** the European Meeting is in-  
tended for young adults under 30, however a  
few adults over this age can also come, in par-  
ticular if they are leading groups of young  
adults. We ask older adults (over 45) to consider  
sponsoring a young person to come from a  
church, chaplaincy or school in their area, in-  
stead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all  
participate in the main group, and arrive on 28th  
December (not before). If you cannot accept the  
same simple accommodation conditions as the  
young people and need a «real bed», please in-  
dicate this when you register.

**Families with children, and people with a dis-  
ability** who need special accommodation should  
contact Taizé—best by telephone in October or  
November—to arrange this.

**Contribution to costs:** The level of contribution  
for young people from Ireland and Britain will be  
approximately £40 for the whole meeting. As  
well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment,  
this covers all meals and a public transport  
pass.

**Travel:** Coach travel from various cities in the  
UK: contact Polonium Travel, 1 Dover Rd,  
SHEFFIELD S11 8RH; tel/fax: 0114 267 9100;  
£95 return (London); leave London 13:00, 27th  
Dec. Return to London approx. 13:15, 3rd Jan.  
Optional travel insurance £13. Plane tickets also  
bookable through Polonium.

**Register for the meeting to Taizé by 1st Decem-  
ber** at the latest. Further information will be sent  
in November to those who register earlier.

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Why do we call God "Father"?

How can we understand the petition  
"Lead us not into temptation"?

"You are beyond all things: how can we call you by another name?" (Gregory of Nazianzen, fourth century). And yet God does not refuse to be compared to a shepherd, a bridegroom, a friend, a father or a mother. "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who worship him" (Psalm 103,13). "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 66,13).

If Christians call God "Father," that is not because they have made a choice among all the different possible names of God, but because Jesus addressed God in this way. As a result, it is not the word "father" in itself, but the life and the prayer of Christ that tell us who God is. "No one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Luke 10,22). We should not focus on what we associate with the word "father" (or "mother," "friend," etc.) based on our own personal experiences. The meaning of God's name "Father" is defined by what God was for Jesus.

In his mother tongue, Aramaic, Jesus said *abba* (Mark 14,36), which we translate as "Father." Some people want to translate it by "papa, daddy" in order to emphasize the fact that Jesus trusted in God like a little child. But we should not forget that *abba* also means "my father" (Matthew 26,39) and that, in the Old Testament, it was the privilege of the king to use these words in addressing God. When the king was inaugurated, God proclaimed, "He will call out to me, 'You are my Father'" (Psalm 89,27). In the Aramaic version of the same psalm: "He will call me *abba*."

Seen with this as background, the relationship between God and Jesus was not only one of filial trust. In this relationship, God is the one who trusts first in Jesus. At the time of Jesus' baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, God's voice is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3,17 and 17,5). As he had earlier given authority to the kings of Israel, God gives Jesus legitimate authority and full power for his mission. That is why in addition to "my Father," Jesus can also refer to God as "the One who sent me" (John 6,38) or "the Father who sent me" (John 12,49).

Calling God "our Father" means knowing that God loves us. Christ, as the Son, reveals just what that love is. It is not a love that holds us back. The Father's love sends his Son into the world. That same love sends each of us into life, liberating dynamic energies in us. The Father's voice, saying "You are my beloved child; I am happy about what you are" authorizes every human being to love life and to turn it into a creation with God.

This is probably the most difficult and controversial petition of the Our Father. Its translation causes problems, beginning with the meaning of the word "temptation." The corresponding verb means "to test." The noun, practically absent from profane Greek and used twenty or so times in the Old Testament, refers to a "trial." For example, by the forty years spent in the wilderness, God "tested" the people of Israel "in order to know what was in their heart" (Deuteronomy 8,2). A trial is a limit-situation that brings to light the basic orientation of a believer: in his misfortune, will he curse God or remain attached to him in spite of everything? These difficult moments are also "temptations" in the sense that, when we undergo them, we can experience the attraction of evil or despair. But the first meaning of the biblical expression is "testing" or "trial." These trials are not necessarily seen as misfortunes: "Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that by being put to the test, your faith develops perseverance" (James 1,2-3).

For what, then, do we ask God in this petition of the Our Father? The expression "not enter into the trial" (or temptation) in the narrative of Gethsemane (Matthew 26,41) helps us to understand more clearly. In the Our Father, we have the "causative" form of this expression: "Make us not enter into the trial." We ask God to protect us from all evil. According to Saint Luke, Jesus repeated the same teaching on the Mount of Olives: "Pray so as not to enter into the trial," in other words "Pray to God to keep you from it" (Luke 22,40).

But can we pray not to be tested at all? Should we not rather ask for the strength to be faithful, the wisdom to deal with the wiles of evil? "Keep us from the trial" is a child's prayer. Children do not ask for the strength to cope with suffering, but want to be secure in the presence of those who love them. This simplicity of a child in prayer corresponds to what Christ reveals to us of God. He is not a severe master who would take a malicious pleasure in putting us to the test. "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt (test) anyone" (James 1,13).

This next-to-last petition of the Lord's Prayer echoes the second: "Your Kingdom come." The end of trials seems impossible but, when we pray for God's Kingdom, we ask for nothing less: "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Revelation 21,4). Where Christ is, there is God's Kingdom. Where the Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead is, there we are preserved from trials. The Tempter cannot touch those who are clothed in God's love (1 John 5,18). "Make us not enter into the trial" can also be expressed: "Keep us united to Christ."



# NOVEMBER

- 1 Mon** **ALL SAINTS**  
Mt 5:1-12  
Jesus said: Happy are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled. Happy are the merciful, for mercy will be shown to them.
- 2 Tue** **St. Paul** writes: 1 Tm 4:7-16  
Train yourself to live in godliness: it holds out promise both for the present life and the life to come.
- 3 Wed** Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?  
Sl 27:30-28:7
- 4 Thu** Who could condemn us? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God, interceding for us.  
Rm 8:31-39
- 5 Fri** Jesus sent out the twelve, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.  
Mt 9:36-10:8
- 6 Sat** Be joyful in your hope, steadfast in hardship, faithful in prayer. Be always ready to offer hospitality.  
Rm 12:3-13
- 7 SUN** Jesus said: Keep watch, for you know neither the day nor the hour.  
Ep 2:14-18
- 8 Mon** Christ came to announce the joyful message of peace: peace to those who are far away, peace to those who are near. Through him, in one Spirit, we all have free access to the Father.  
Mt 16:24-26
- 9 Tue** Jesus said: If anyone wants to follow me, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.  
Mt 16:24-26
- 10 Wed** Jesus said: Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.  
Ep 4:1-6
- 11 Thu** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you have all been called to one hope.  
Mt 13:31-33
- 12 Fri** Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with a large amount of flour until the whole thing rose.  
Jn 14:21-26
- 13 Sat** Jesus said: The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.  
Jn 14:21-26
- 14 SUN** In a parable, the master said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share your master's happiness!"  
Mt 18:1-5
- 15 Mon** Jesus said: Whoever makes himself humble like a child is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me.  
Mt 18:1-5
- 16 Tue** God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.  
1 Jn 4:16-21
- 17 Wed** Happy are they who are not in anguish over their failings and who do not founder in despair. For if they are hard upon themselves, to whom will they be kind?  
Sl 14:1-6, 14-16
- 18 Thu** Jesus said: Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.  
Jn 12:23-26
- 19 Fri** A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."  
Jn 21:15-19
- 20 Sat** You guide me, Lord, on paths of righteousness. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me.  
Ps 23
- 21 SUN** Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.  
Mt 25:31-40
- 22 Mon** Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.  
Ps 105:1-5
- 23 Tue** Peter said: I now really understand that God has no favourites, but that in every nation he loves those who revere him and act justly.  
Ac 10:1-35
- 24 Wed** God says: I will go before you and will level the mountains so that you may know that I am the Lord, the one who calls you by name.  
Is 45:1-7
- 25 Thu** Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.  
Jn 13:31-35
- 26 Fri** Jesus said: I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having revealed to little children what you have hidden from the learned and clever.  
Mt 11:25-27
- 27 Sat** Paul writes: Any one who sows generously will also reap generously. God loves the one who gives joyfully.  
2 Co 9:6-11
- 28 SUN ADVENT**  
God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.  
Is 45:18-19
- 29 Mon** The Lord says: I did not tell my people to search for me in chaos. I am the Lord God, who proclaims justice, who speaks what is true.  
Is 45:18-19
- 30 Tue** **St ANDREW**  
Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.  
Mt 4:18-22

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD



# DECEMBER

## MEDITATING ON THE WORD

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

- 5 SUN** <sup>Mk 1:1-8</sup> John the Baptist said: After me will come one more powerful than I. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.  
**6 MON** <sup>Lk 12:22-31</sup> Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life? If such a small thing is beyond your power, why worry about the rest?  
**7 TUE** <sup>1 Jn 3:14-20</sup> Let us not love just with words and in speech, but with actions and in truth.  
**8 WED** <sup>Lk 1:26-38</sup> Mary said to the angel: I am the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.  
**9 THU** <sup>Lk 1:67-79</sup> At John the Baptist's birth, Zechariah said: Blessed be God, for he allows us to serve him without fear.  
**10 FRI** <sup>1 Jn 2:7-10</sup> The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Whoever loves their neighbour remains in the light.  
**11 SAT** <sup>Jn 17:11-21</sup> Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and the world may believe that you sent me.  
**12 SUN** <sup>Jn 1:19-27</sup> John said: I baptise with water; but standing among you — unknown to you — is the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandal.  
**13 MON** <sup>Mt 5:1-12</sup> Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart: they shall see God. Happy are the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.  
**14 TUE** <sup>Ac 20:17-38</sup> Paul said: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."  
**15 WED** <sup>Jn 8:12</sup> Jesus said: I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark but will have the light of life.  
**16 THU** <sup>Ps 84</sup> Happy are they, who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.  
**17 FRI** <sup>1 Jn 4:7-11</sup> Let us love one another, for love is of God and whoever loves is born of God and knows God.  
**18 SAT** <sup>Mt 6:31-34</sup> Jesus said: strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness. Do not worry about tomorrow.  
**19 SUN** <sup>Lk 1:26-38</sup> The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.  
**20 MON** <sup>2 Co 8:7-15</sup> Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich.  
**21 TUE** <sup>Ps 36</sup> In you, Lord, is the source of life; in your light we see light.  
**22 WED** <sup>Ps 46</sup> God is our refuge and strength, and an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be in turmoil.  
**23 THU** <sup>Dt 30:11-14</sup> God's Word is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.  
**24 FRI** <sup>Jn 1:1-18</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.  
**25 SAT** <sup>Is 9:1-6</sup> CHRISTMAS  
The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And this will be his name: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.  
**26 SUN** <sup>Lk 2:22-38</sup> When Simeon saw the child Jesus, he praised God and said: Now, Lord, you can let your servant depart in peace as you promised. For my eyes have seen the salvation you have prepared for all people to see.  
**27 MON** <sup>1 Jn 1:1-4</sup> St JOHN  
Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us.  
**28 TUE** <sup>Col 3:12-17</sup> Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. The Lord has forgiven you, do the same in your turn.  
**29 WED** <sup>Lk 6:20-23</sup> Looking at his disciples, Jesus said: Happy are you who are poor, the kingdom of God is yours.  
**30 THU** <sup>Lk 11:9-13</sup> Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.  
**31 FRI** <sup>Jn 15:9-17</sup> Jesus said: You did not choose me. No, I chose you, and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit.

- 1 WED** <sup>Ps 55:17-19</sup> To God I call and he saves me, evening, morning and at noon. God's peace delivers my soul, for he hears my cry.  
**2 THU** <sup>Is 43:18-21</sup> The Lord says: Look, I am doing something new, even now it is emerging, do you not see it? Yes, I am making a way in the desert and my people will sing my praises.  
**3 FRI** <sup>Jn 14:19-23</sup> Jesus said: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home in them.  
**4 SAT** <sup>2 Co 3:16-18</sup> All of us, with our unveiled faces reflecting God's glory like mirrors, are being transformed into the image that we reflect.



How can we know God's will? When Jesus, risen from the dead, gathers his disciples once again, they think that now they are well placed to discover the great plan which God has conceived for his people, and indeed for all the inhabitants of the earth. The question they ask him, using expressions current at that time and place, attempts to discover something that human beings have always wanted to know in order to live authentically.

The first answer Jesus gives seems disappointing. He tells them that this knowledge is reserved to the Father alone. It is not that he does not want to share it with us. But "to know the times or dates" from without, we would have to be God. Human beings exist within time and therefore cannot get distance from the events of their history. Otherwise, they would no longer be what they truly are.

Nevertheless, Jesus ultimately does give a positive answer to their question. You will receive the power of the Spirit, he tells them, and this will enable you to bear witness to me. Although no knowledge of God's plan is possible from the outside, that plan will be revealed to them from within; they will discover it by living it! The gift of the Spirit sets the disciples of Christ on the road of witnessing. They will continue the work of their Teacher by undertaking a pilgrimage of trust across the earth. The Spirit, who sheds light on this road step by step, will never leave them. This good news remains difficult for that part of ourselves that wants to know everything ahead of time before making a commitment, but in the final analysis it is the only way our freedom can fully come into its own. It brings us into contact with the God who imposes nothing, whose will is not a trap, the God who offers us the possibility of a permanent creation with him.

- What helps me to discern the next step that the Spirit of God suggests to me in order to live out my faith in Christ?
- What allows me to trust in a God who does not reveal his plans ahead of time?

The Book of Job directly confronts the question which has always unsettled people's minds and kept many from believing in a God of love. Why does God allow innocent people to suffer? A figure of all the good persons who have become victimized by evil, Job does his best to keep going in a situation where there seems to be no way out. An honest man, he refuses to consent to the too-facile explanations with which his friends attempt to comfort him. In his distress, he even reaches the point of thinking that human beings are unable to understand a God whose ways are so upsetting. Life on this earth seems destined to remain an enigma: "Where can wisdom be found? (...) No mortal knows the way to it; it cannot be found in the land of the living. (...) It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing" (Job 28,12-13.21).

Then, when all hope seems to have vanished once and for all, God himself enters the picture. After encountering him, Job speaks these words of light: "Before this I knew you only by hearsay, but now I have seen you with my own eyes." The answer to the question that haunts him is not an intellectual one. Job does not discover any clever arguments that "explain" his situation. At the heart of his suffering, however, he has an experience of God that changes radically his way of looking at things. The trials he suffered have brought him closer to the living God who, beyond our preconceived ideas, "forms plans of peace and not of disaster, to give a future and a hope" (cf. Jer 29,11). His painful experience has removed a veil and enabled him to discover that, although the Lord is different from anything he had imagined and his ways are often almost incomprehensible, God is not his enemy. On the contrary, God is the one who constantly calls us to leave behind our too-human certainties in order to find peace in a communion with him.

- Have I gone through times of trial when my habitual way of viewing myself, God and the world was called into question and no longer worked? What enabled me to find my balance again?
- Have I had experiences which showed me that God is always beyond all the images we have of him? When and how?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

## VISITS NOVEMBER 1999

One of the brothers of the Taizé Community will visit Australia in November 1999

**Tasmania:** 3-5 November in Hobart and Penguin

Contact: Revd Robert Faser  
Tasmanian Council of Churches  
29 Bathurst Street, HOBART 7000  
Tel/Fax 61 34 2543  
Email: tcc@trump.net.au

**New South Wales:** 5-12 & 15-18 November

5-7: retreat at St John's Centre in Morperth  
10-11: Canberra  
15-18: Sydney  
Contact: NSW Ecumenical Council  
Private Bag 199 Q.V.B. PO  
Sydney 1230

Tel 0292992215

Fax 0292624514

Email: kmoroney@ncca.org.au

**Queensland:** 12-15 November in Brisbane

Contact: Queensland Together  
PO Box 2045  
Milton 4064  
Tel 0733696792  
Fax 0733698573  
Email: russell@tpg.com.au

Brothers of Taizé will also visit Houston, Texas (USA) from 10-16 November

Contact: Liz & Al Turner  
7722 Candlegreen Lane  
77071 Houston TX  
Tel 713-728-9284  
Email: turner@dt.uh.edu





# Echoes from the Continents

## Brazil

### A Meeting of Young People

In early July, a meeting of young people was prepared in Alagoinhas by the Taizé brothers who have been living in a poor area of that city for many years. Alagoinhas has 150,000 inhabitants. There are only two parishes, divided into many small communities in each neighbourhood, with very few priests to take care of it all.

Friday morning, just as the 2,000 participants were arriving, a heavy shower drenched the field where two large tents had been set up: ten centimetres of water everywhere! The young people spent three hours cleaning up everything before the meeting began. After that the weather got better; it did not rain again until Sunday midday, when the meeting was over. It is as if the heavens were especially attentive to the meeting!

Friday afternoon and Saturday morning people took part in workshops, choosing among five themes: "sharing and solidarity"; "reconciliation within oneself and in the Church"; "God the Father"; "discover your vocation"; "prayer." Some said that the topics were so interesting for them that they regretted having to choose and could not attend every one of the workshops.

All the participants stayed with families in thirty-four districts of Alagoinhas. Saturday morning there was a prayer in each community, followed by meetings. The young people ate in the families. Saturday afternoon, participants looked for signs of hopes in the districts, simple but beautiful realities. People visited the neediest, the poorest of the poor. Families often do not have much room in their homes, but they prepare at least a little table with a candle, a few flowers, a statue of the Virgin Mary. The young people come and pray in a small group with

the family, then move on to another house. For many, the fact that people come to pray with them is like a blessing for their home.

The prayers all together were beautiful and peaceful, with songs in Portuguese. It was necessary to prepare a covered space for the prayer because it was wintertime. Friday evening we met around a large cross. "The prayer which touched me the most," wrote one of the participants, "was on Saturday evening. It was so beautiful to see that great carpet of candles lit to celebrate the resurrection. It gave me a lot of confidence that God is present in our midst." The meeting ended with a Mass. Sunday morning, participants walked to the Mass on pilgrimage from the communities where they were staying, and those who had offered them hospitality also came, so that in all 4000 persons were present.

Young Brazilians came from far away, even from Amazonia, from Belo Horizonte, from Sao Paulo. Some of them spent thirty hours on the bus to reach Alagoinhas. Right after the meeting, two boys and two girls from Alagoinhas left for Taizé, where they will stay for three months.

## Russia

### Signs of Hope

*Natasha tells of a meeting she had when she went back to her country, Russia, after having spent a year in Taizé:*

It is hard to imagine how people can survive on a salary of thirty dollars a month, while still remaining optimistic. But there are people who keep searching and who have a zest for life. They try to realize their projects locally and, in spite of difficulties, they find ways of nourishing their hope and their joy in what surrounds them.

At Obninsk, I visited the parish of Saints Boris and Gleb. The church itself is found in the village of Belkino, not far from the town. All that is left in that village is a few old houses where elderly persons are ending their days. Brick villas built by the "new Russians" are gradually replacing the old houses. There is also a memorial park which surrounds the church and two large houses that are almost completely in ruins. They say that famous people used to live in them, from Pushkin to Chaliapin. It used to be a real park, but today everything is in a very bad state.

When I arrived, children were playing near the church. I was told that they were part of a summer camp organized by the parish. Father Alexis and his wife welcomed me and we talked while sharing a cup of tea. I gave them news from Taizé and spoke about the meeting in

Milan that I helped to prepare. They were very happy to discover that people still remembered them in Taizé. Then Father Alexis told me about his work in the parish. Every summer he organizes a camp for young people. The daily program resembles a day in Taizé: prayer, bible introductions, work and different activities. A local company provides free fish and also a bus to bring the children on an outing to Saint Petersburg. The idea of the summer camps came up because of the growing number of youths who take drugs (the town of Obninsk has the highest percentage of young people affected by drugs in the whole region of Kaluga and AIDS is on the rise). To provide activities for the young people and to awaken their interest, Father Alexis has developed, in addition to this camp, religious education, courses on the history of Christianity and small sharing-groups. Young people of the parish also take care of a group of disabled persons. The evening I was there, we celebrated the birthday of one of these persons. Everyone gathered in the forest to sing to this accompaniment of guitars.

Then I was shown the church and the nearby house, both recently restored. This house will be used for parish meetings. Father Alexis wants to open a kind of hospitality centre where people can meet around a cup of tea. In general there is little contact between neighbouring parishes, since everyone is so busy with their own affairs. The hope is that this house will make it easier to meet.

## Letter from Taizé

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